

10 April 1979

Central Intelligence Agency
National Foreign Assessment Center
Office of Imagery Analysis

WORKING PAPER

TECHNICAL STAFF

Significant Items, Week of 2-6 April 1979

1. We received and reviewed the final draft of the SAFE paper on functional requirements and implementation priorities. There are essentially four basic areas of analytical support addressed in the following order of implementation: mail and message routing, private file maintenance, multiple file search, and intelligence production. Although even test implementation is still a minimum of two years off, these basic requirements will allow the contractor [redacted] to continue design and component procurement. [redacted]

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2. Another draft was received for review at COB on 30 March from the NSC Staff -- supposedly written by a NSC Staff task force under the direction/chairmanship of a White House staffer. This draft was one of several put together recently throughout the Community concerning the release of photoreconnaissance imagery in support of SALT II. Specifically, this NSC draft addressed options on declassification and release of additional information or selected high-quality images in support of Senate ratification [redacted]

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Chief, Technical Staff
Office of Imagery Analysis

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THE ADMINISTRATION still has not decided, for instance, on how far it should or could go in making available photographs taken by U.S. spy satellites. Although it has long been known that such photographs play an important role in verifying compliance with elements of a strategic arms limitation agreement, the government only officially acknowledged their existence in October.

A paper produced by the National Security Council listing four options is circulating within the government to solicit comment, according to sources with access to the document.

The first option would be to do nothing more, since even the acknowledgement of the existence of the photographs came only after long debate. The intelligence community feared — and still fears — that it was the start of a slide down a long, slippery slope of damaging disclosures.

The second option in the paper would bring increased discussion of U.S. satellite capability, including drawings and scale models of the Soviet facilities that the satellites photograph, but no pictures.

THE THIRD OPTION would be to make ready the release of selected photographs taken of Soviet strategic installations, but use them publicly only if an extra boost were needed in the fight to gain ratification of the SALT treaty in the Senate.

The fourth option calls for release of the pictures with an accompanying plan to make the most of them.

The intelligence community opposes release, making the "slippery slope" argument. And while the Soviet Union knows full well about the satellites, and has its own, it does not take to public discussion of them.

Moreover, according to one Pentagon source, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko informed U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in January that the Soviet Union did not want the pictures released and therefore available to such hostile neighbors as the People's Republic of China.

THE OPTION PAPER lists other arguments, both pro and con. For one thing, not all of the photographs are of the "gee whiz, look at that" category showing things impressive to the layman.

They require a good deal of skilled and knowledgeable interpretation before they yield their intelligence information. In some, for instance, Soviet missile silos are not seen, but

rather inferred from road patterns, command vans and wiring trenches.

The NSC paper asks why the public has to see them when it is the Senate that has to be convinced — and senators already have access. In addition, the paper spells out fears that opponents of the SALT treaty will use release of the photos to accuse the administration of compromising U.S. intelligence to sell SALT at any cost.

And, the paper goes on, it could shift the debate from the issues the administration wants to emphasize to those it doesn't.

The satellite photos are part of what is called verification of SALT provisions, useful to determine size, location and, most important, number of missile silos.

BUT THERE ARE other aspects of verification that are giving the administration more trouble at the moment, chiefly the loss of U.S. bases in Iran that were used to electronically observe and eavesdrop on Soviet missile shots.

Brown's remarks met the issue

head on, admitting that the intelligence gathered by the installations in Iran was important. "We are examining alternative means of collection, and the question is not 'if' we will reinstitute this capability, but how, where and how quickly we can do it."

The New York Times reported yesterday that the administration plans to use as a stopgap an electronically sophisticated new version of the old U2 spy plane to fill this gap. At the Pentagon, however, this was described as merely one alternative under consideration, and one that in any event probably would not be ready for regular use until 1982.